THE TOUCHSTONE OF A CHRISTIAN.

Wherein is plainly demonstrated and clearly discovered the vast difference between such as have but only the name and profession of Godliness, and such as practice the same in the power thereof.

Whereby every one may try their own ways, and know whether their present Estate be either Happy or Miserable.

Very profitable for these times.

LONDON,

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THE TOUCHSTONE OF A CHRISTIAN:

COnsidering that Satan the Prince of Darkness hath so blinded the Eyes of most men and women in the World, that being void of saving Knowledge, they are apt to put evil for good, and good for evil, having their minds possessed with a good opinion of themselves, and the safety of their condition, in reference to Eternity; which notwithstanding, if it be throughly tryed, will appear to be far otherwise, and that they do indeed but

deceive their own Souls. Therefore, that all which read or hear this little Book may be exhorted to examine themselves and to prove their works, whether they are such, to whom eternal life is promised, I shall in my following discourse speak of such principal qualifications which are required to be in every true Christian, and are of such absolute necessity to the leading of a godly life, that whosoever is not in some measure endued with the same, can not have any reasonable ground from the Word of God to expect Salvation.

Those necessary Graces, or Qualifications which I shall treat of are these following, Humility, Faith, Repentance, Love, and Obedience.

Humility
Faith
Repentance
Love, &
Obedience

And first to speak of Humility, which is the very first Lesson of a Christian: for so it is in Psal. 25. 9. He will teach the humble his way. And Jam. 4, 6. God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. The first step to saving knowledge, is to have an humble conceit of our own wisdom, to know our own ignorance. Behold (saith God, the high and mighty one that inhabiteth Eternity) even to this man will I look, who is of an humble spirit, and

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trembleth at my word. Christ will own none but the humble soul: he himself was the true pattern of Humility, whose example we are to follow: for he that expects salvation by Christ, ought so to walk, even as he walked: Learn of me (saith Christ) for I am meek and humble. And he hath pronounced a blessing to such as imitate him here: as in Mat. 5. 5. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. And again he saith, Mat. 23. 12. Whosoever exalteth himself, shall be brought low, but whosoever humbleth himself, shall be exalted. The Lord is high, saith the Psalmist, yet he beholdeth the lowly, but the proud he knoweth a far off, Psal. 138. 6. The pride of a man shall bring him low, but the humble in spirit shall enjoy Glory, Prov. 29. 23. Thus you see it is only to the humble soul, that God will have respect, for a proud look, and a proud heart, are an abomination to the Lord.

Now this Humility doth consist in having a mean and low esteem of our selves, and a deep sence of our unworthiness, by reason of the filthiness and pollutions wherewith Sin hath defiled our nature, and doth stain and pollute all

our Actions. Hereby we come to abhor o
selves, to renounce all merit of our ow
and all sufficiency in our selves, to
thing that is good, acknowledging th
the least mercy we enjay, is more th
we deserve: this made David say; I a
less then the least of all thy mercies:
what am I, that thou shouldst do suc
great things for me? this made the Ce
turion say to Christ; I am not worth
that thou shouldest enter under my roo
and John the Baptist; I am not worth
to unlose the latchet of his shoes: a
Paul, I am less then the least of Apostle
not worthy to be called an Apostle
So all Gods Servants were very carefu
not to think of themselves above wh
is meet. When Paul had been speakin
how he had been labouring in the Gospe
he presently corrects himself, and saith
Not I, but the Grace of God in me.
This is the frame of a Christians spi
rit, to give all the Glory to God, an
to think every one better than himself.
Therefore whosoever thou art, that a
highly conceited of thy own worth, th
seemest wise in thy own eyes, that a
apt to boast of thy good parts, and n
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ser as yet sawest thy self to be a poor, miserable, naked, empty [nothing] creature, void of all goodness, and utterly unworthy to receive any favour or blessing from the Lord, thou hast not yet attained to true Humility, nor set one step forward towards Heaven.

But Secondly, The second Qualification required in a Christian, is Faith, Mark 16. 16. Whosoever believeth, and is Baptized, shall be saved; but he that will not believe, shall be damned, John. 3. 15, 16. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believed on him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the only begotten Son of God. But because it is common for all sorts of persons to think that they do believe, and that therefore they may lay claim to the promise of eternal life, I will give you the character of a lively saving Faith, without which it is impossible to please God.

1. True Faith worketh by love, consumeth our Corruptions, and sanctifieth the whole man throughout: so that our

Faith to God, is seen in our faithfulness to men; our invisible belief, by our visible life; Faith and Holiness, are as inseperable as Life and Motion, the Sun and Light, Fire and Heat, Ice and Coldness, Honey and Sweetness.

Again, Faith believeth the threats of the Words, as well as the promises; and if such as think they have Faith, did believe the truth of those threatnings which God hath denounced against Swearers, Drunkards, Unclean, Covetous, Ambitious, Unjust, Envious, Malicous Persons, and such like Sinners, how durst they then so wallow in these sins? that if God instead of Hell, had promised Heaven for a reward unto them, they could not do more then they do. Many do sottishly deceive themselves with an opinion of Faith, who indeed believe not so much as the Devil doth, for he believes the threatnings of the Word, and trembles for horrour; but they go on in sin, even mocking at the Menaces, and in the infidelity of their hearts, even give them the lye, saying, no such things shall befal them: but what saith the Apostle, When they shall say, peace and safety, then comes on them sudden destruction. 1 Thes. 5. 3.

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But Thirdly, True Faith is wrought by the Spirit of God, in the hearing or reading the Word at the time of a mans conversion, when God enlightens his mind, to see his lost, undone, and perishing condition, and convinceth him of his unbelief: so that whosoever never saw himself to be without Faith, hath as yet, no Faith: for however many think it an easie matter to believe, yet he that goes about it, shall find that it is as hard a work to believe in the Gospel, as to keep the Law; and only God must enable to both: It is easie indeed for a soul that was never burthened with sin, that was never sensible of the filthiness thereof, and of Gods wrath due unto it: such a one thinks it a small matter to believe; but this is a sure rule, that that perswasion only which follows Humiliation, is Faith, and that which goes before it is Presumption. Then,

Fourthly, True Faith, as it is wrought by the Spirit of God, it brings forth the fruits of the Spirit, mentioned, Gal. 5. 22, 23. Faith never goes alone, but hath a whole train of other Graces to follow her; as the Apostle saith, Add to your Faith Vertue, and to Vertue Temperance, and to Temperance

rance Patience, and to Patience Brotherly kindneſs, and to Brotherly kindneſs Charity; theſe and many more do always accompany a lively Faith. But to proceed.

The third Qualification which I mentioned, is True Repentance; and that is through change, wrought in the whole man, whereby he becomes a new Creature, and turns from every ſin, to the contrary good; from Pride, to Humility; from Drunkenneſs, to Sobriety; from Vain Diſcourſe, to Holy Communion; from Covetouſneſs, to Liberallity; from Laciviouſneſs, to Chaſtity: and this not only for a little while, but even ſo long as he lives: which repentance is ever accompanied with a hatred of the ſin we turn from, and a love of that good we turn unto; and is uſually procured by the conſideration of Gods unſpeakable goodneſs towards us, according to the Apoſtle; The goodneſs of God leadeth thee to Repentance. When we come to conſider what God hath done for us, how he Created us after his own Image; and when by ſinning we had loſt the ſame, and plunged our ſelves into miſery, he ſent his only Son to redeem, and regain our happineſs, how his merits are re-

renewed daily towards us, in preserving, providing for us, and how ill we repayed the Lord for the same, when instead of living to his Glory, we have gloried in doing such things as do greatly dishonour him, being rebellious, stubborn, disobedient to all his Holy Laws and Commandements, abusing his Merits, slighting his Promises, despising his Judgements, and turning his Grace into Wantonness, thereby vexing, grieving, and quenching his Holy Spirit: and yet, notwithstanding this, and much more, the Lord doth still spare us, and let us live, whereas he might justly cut us off, and cast us into Hell: he doth still wait to be gracious, he calls us to come and accept of free Mercy, and promises to pardon and pass by what is past, if for the future we will amend our lives. This is that which makes us to loath our selves, to lye low before the Lord, to be exceedingly sorry that we should be so vile, and so unworthy, as to offend so gracious a God; this breeds a displeasure against our selves, and our ways, and a hatred against sin: from hence ariseth in our hearts a full purpose and resolution

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to forsake every evil way, and to walk in newness of life; and this is true repentance, without which none can be saved: for except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish: and except a man be born again, he shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven: but whosoever doth repent him of his sins, from the bottom of his heart, so as utterly to forsake them, he shal find mercy: the Lord hath promised it, and it shall surely be performed. But,

Fourthly, The next qualification I am to speak of, is Love, and that is twofold.

1. To God himself: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.

2. To our Brethren: This is my Commandment, saith Christ, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you: And that we may know how to express our Love, he saith in another place, If ye love me, keep my Commandments: he that saith he loves God, and yet keepeth not his Commandments, is a Lyar. If we have a friend that we love dearly, how careful are we to please him? how unwilling

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to do any thing which might procure his anger? we think no labour nor pains too much, imployed in serving him, we spare no cost nor charge, to express our high esteem of his friendship: but hath not God been a greater friend to us then any man can be? ought we not much much more to love him, who is infinitely worthy to be beloved for his own sake, if he had never done any thing for us? but now if we be careless in his service, negligent in performing what he requires of us, unwilling to part with any thing, that he calls to us for, it seems our Love is very cold: this is not loving God with all our hearts, when we will do more for an acquaintance, or a relation, then for him. Indeed, God doth not stand in need of what we can do; he is beyond the reach of our good works: our love cannot add to his Blessedness; as David saith, My goodness extendeth not to thee. Yet he requires that in testimony of our Love and thankfulness to him, for what we have received from him, we should shew forth the same in all expressions of Kindness and Charity, to those that may be benefited thereby: and it is a sure

rule,

rule, he that loves God, for his own sake, will love his Brother for Gods sake. A true and pious Christian desires to do something for Christ, who hath done and suffered so much for him, and who is pleased to take that so kindly, which we do for his sake, that he hath promised whosoever shall give but a cup of cold water in his Name, he shall not go unrewarded: Therefore if thou bearest any good will to God or Christ, whom it is not in thy power to pleasure, thou wilt shew thy thankfulness to him in his Children, who are bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh: it is impossible that he who hath Love should be ungrateful: Mary Magdalen had received much, and this made her love much, and loving much, she thought nothing too much to bestow, even upon the most remote members of Christ, to express her thankfulness. An ingenious disposition cannot receive favours without thoughts of return: Behold thou hast been careful for us, saith Elisha to the Shunamite: with all this care, now what is to be done for thee? so saith the true Christian: Behold O Lord, thou hast been ex-

exceeding gracious, thou hast conferred great benefits upon me, now how can I sufficiently express my thankfulness unto thee, for the same. What shall I render to the Lord for all his mercies? saith David. Indeed all that we can do is too little, but God doth not look for such Love and Service from us, as he is worthy to receive, but as we are able to give: and it is for our own good that he would be served and magnified by us, that so he may reward our labour of Love, with everlasting bliss and happiness.

Now the best way to make it appear that the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, is to be fruitful in the Works of Piety and Charity, Pure Religeon, and undefiled before God, saith St. James, Is to visit the fatherless and widows in their adversity, and to keep himself unspotted from the World. Love is the fulfilling of the Law, Rom. 13.10. We ought so to love our Neighbour as our selves. But how do we so, if we take not care for them, as we do for our selves? Dost thou see any one in affliction, or want comfort? consider,

if

if thou wert in such a condition, as God knows how soon thou maist, wouldst not thou in thy need be relieved? Why then surely 'tis reason thou shouldst do to others, as thou wouldst have them do to thee; and for our encouragement to this duty of Love or Charity. Consider that Christ accounts that which is done to his poor members here on earth, as done to himself; as appears by many express Testimonies of Scripture. When I was an hungred, ye fed me; when I was naked, ye cloathed me; when I was in prison, ye visited me; for in as much as ye did it to one of these little ones, that believed in me, ye did it unto me, Mat. 25.34, &c. He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord, Prov. 19.17. To do good and to distribute, forget not, for with such Sacrifice God is well-pleased: look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of other men: let the same mind be in you, which was even in Christ Jesus, Phil. 2.4, 5, 6. He that is endued with this Grace of Love will open his hands to such as are in want: and so far as his ability extends, will lend or give to them sufficient for their need: as God commands, Deut. 15. 8. It will

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make a man of Jobs Spirit, who would not eat his morsels alone, but invited the fatherless to eat with him, Job 31. 17. It will make a man love his enemies, and do good to them that do hurt to him, Luke. 6. 35. Yea more, it will make a man lay down his life for the brethren, 1 John. 3. 16. These are the properties of Christian Love, which will appear more or less in the life of every true believer: but he that hath this worlds good, and seeth his Brother in want, and yet hath no compassion of him, how dwells the love of God in that man?

But in the Fifth and last place, Obedience to Gods will and Commandments is the main Duty of every Christian, Heb. 5. 9. Christ is said to be the Author of eternal Salvation unto all that obey him: not unto them which continue in their rebellious wickedness, and never submit to be ruled by the Scepter of his word: Christs blood was shed for ablution, as well as absolution: as well to cleanse from the soil and filth of sin, as to clear and free from the guilt of sin, Rom. 6. 5, 6. God hath chosen us in Christ, from the Creation of the World, that we should be holy, and

without blame before him in Love, Eph. 1. 4. They therefore that never come to be Holy, never were chosen. We are said to be Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them: Christ came not to save us in our Sins, but from our sins: to redeem unto himself a peculiar people, Zealous of good works: and it is his Commandment: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorifie your Father which is in Heaven. Yea, the Lord hath bound it with an Oath: that whomsoever he redeemeth out of the hands of their spiritual enemies, they shall worship him in Holiness and Righteousness all the days of their life, Luke 1. 73, &c. This is that obedience which is better then Sacrifice, and without which let none expect to be saved: for God hath said, Without Holiness no man shall see the Lord: be ye therefore holy, even as God is holy. There are many wicked men, who go on in a continual course of sin, and make no conscience of obeying Gods Word, or of walking in his ways: yet they think

think themselves good Christians, and doubt not of their Salvation: every drunken beast and blasphemer thinks to go to Heaven, though none shall come there, nor once see God without Holiness, which they abhor.

One minds nothing but his Cups: another nothing but his Coyn: a third only his Curtizan: yet all these appoint to meet in heaven, but this is not the way thither, 1 John 2. 16. The Lust of the Eye, and the pride of life is a broad way indeed, but not to Heaven: Or, Know ye not, saith the Apostle, the unrighteous shall not enter into the Kingdom of God: be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Adulterers, nor unclean persons, nor Covetous, nor Drunkards, nor Swearers, nor Lyars, can claim any interest in the promise of eternal life by Christ Jesus: For that grace of God which bringeth salvation, teacheth us to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world, Tit. 2. 12. If Christ be not our King to govern us, he will neither be our Prophet to forewarn, nor our Priest to expiate. Except we forsake our sins, God will never forgive them: it cannot

consist with his Justice to pardon such as continue in an evil course of life, if Christ hath freed us from the damnation of sin, he hath also freed us from the dominion of sin: if with his blood he hath quenched the fire of Hell for us, he hath also quenched the fire of Lust in us: Christs Justifying blood, is given by his Sanctifying Spirit. Therefore such as have no government of their Passions, no conscience of their Actions, no care of their lives: whatever they think or pretend, they have no portion nor share in the promises of the Gospel. How many that would be accounted Christians, and think to go to heaven, yet in sundry particulars fall short of many wicked reprobates recorded in Scripture; who never had the hearts, upon the hearing the threatnings of the Word, to relent, and humble themselves with Ahab, to confess their sins, and desire the people of God to pray for them: with Pharach to be affected with joy in hearing the Word, and practice many things: with Herod to be zealous against sin: with Jehu, willing to part with a good part of their goods: with Ananias, to forsake the world and all their hopes in it, to follow Christ: as Demas

and

and others, to venture their lives with Alexander the Copper-smith, in cleaving to the truth. Yea, it is said of Judas himself, that he repented: there is Contrition: he saith, I have sinned: there is Confession: and he restored the money again: there is satisfaction, which is all the Papists repentance: and yet he is Judas the Son of perdition still. Now examine thy self, and try whether thou dost not come short of these: if so, it is but madness for thee to please thy self in a false conceit of thine own happiness. Ungodly men think God is all mercy, yet the Word tells us he is a consuming fire, and a jealous God: and how can they expect he should be merciful to them, who are unmerciful and cruel to him, to his, and to their own souls? Indeed the Lord is very gracious and ready to forgive such as are humble and penitent sinners, who are willing to be cleansed from their sins, and to put away the evil of their doings, and abhor themselves because of their iniquities: he is exceeding merciful, and full of compassion to such: but to those that wilfully go on in wickedness following the lusts and desires of their own hearts; he will not speak peace to them,

but

but if they repent not, he will come in flames of Fire to take vengeance upon them.

Therefore consider this, all ye that forget God, least he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver. Yea, consider well all you that read or hear this Book, what great difference there is betwixt a Christian in name, and a Christian indeed: examine your hearts throughly, and try your selves by this Touchstone, and see whether you were ever as yet truly humbled under the sight and sence of your Original Corruption, and Actual Transgression: whether sin hath ever been a burthen unto you, and your greatest grief: whether you were ever savingly enlightned to discern the hidden mysteries of the Gospel, and enabled in some measure to lay hold upon Christ by a lively Faith, such as purifies your hearts, and makes you prize Christ more then all things in the world: whether you did ever with hatred of your sins, turn from them, and return unto God by true repentance, and are become new Creatures, to what ends you were: whether you love God with all your hearts, being careful to please him, fearful to

offend

offend him, willing to part with any thing that is near or dear unto you, when he calls for it: whether you are obedient to his will, in keeping his Commandments, in sanctifying his Sabaths, in walking in his ways, in observing his Statutes to do them, in leading a Godly, Righteous and Sober Life, in doing good to all, where it lies in your power, in loving your enemies, and rendring good for evil, in honouring God with your substance, and living holily, righteously, and unblamably in this present World: if not, then all your confidence is but presumption, and Christ will say unto you in the last day, Depart from me, I know you not.

O that God would open your eyes, and let you see those things which concern your everlasting peace, before you go from hence and be no more seen.

FINIS.